

Flush It, Don't Eat it

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I used to have a family member who never had a cheerful or affirming thing to say. She was grumpy and judgmental, and nothing was ever good enough. But I learned an exceedingly valuable life lesson from her.

One day I realized that the way she treated me was like the solid waste that goes into toilets, if you know what I mean. I had a choice with how to handle it. I could internalize it, which would be like pulling out a spoon and eating it . . . or I could refuse to take it personally, and send it away by flushing it. There was a delightful sense of power the first time I told myself, "This is about her, not me," as I mentally reached for the handle and said to myself, "Flushhhhhh!" I couldn't help but smile at the freedom I felt.

I couldn't keep her brokenness, her own "heart garbage" from dumping on me, but I found a way to refuse to accept it and make it *my* heart garbage. Result: greater emotional health for me.

When I taught the high school girls' Bible study at my church, they would complain about the way the high school boys treated them. (Not abuse, just relational cluelessness.) I assured them that high school boys are not fully formed human beings yet, and they needed to finish growing up. But I also empowered the girls with this wisdom, instructing them how to mentally reach over, hit the handle and say to themselves, "Flushhhhhh!" Swearing them to secrecy within the Bible study, I suggested that if some boy said something dumb, the girls could look at each another and say, "FI!" for "flush it."

It drove the boys nuts. "Feminine Intuition?" "Nope! You'll never guess what it means, it's a secret!" The girls told me it really helped them to not take the boys' immature comments

personally; I told them that I was glad they were learning the lesson then, and they just might find it helpful for dealing with a parent, a future mother-in-law, or some other person whose hurtfulness they couldn't escape.

Jesus showed us this pattern; He knew how to keep Himself mentally and emotionally balanced even though He was surrounded by people who kept giving Him reason to "flush." He never put His emotional eggs in their baskets—He never took their misunderstanding and their judgments personally (until the cross, when He absorbed every bit of our sin and judgments into Himself). Even during His torture and crucifixion, He kept releasing the hurts of people into the Father's hands, saying repeatedly, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Whether it's someone cutting us off in traffic, or dissing us in a group setting or a Facebook thread, or any other place where people's sinfulness and brokenness spews out on us, it's helpful to tell ourselves, "Flush it, don't eat it."

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